Joe Benitez's

Lady Mechanika™

Vol. 3

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The Lost Boys of West Abbey

THE
COMPLETE
VOLUME THREE
THIRD
VOLUME

LADY MECHANIKA™
VOLUME 3: THE LOST BOYS OF WEST ABBEY

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STUDIO J-13

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Originally published in single magazine form as LADY MECHANIKA: THE LOST BOYS OF WEST ABBEY

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Published by Benitez Productions,
P.O. Box 16101, Encino, CA 91416

DIGITAL COPY

ALSO AVAILABLE IN PRINT
ISBN: 978-0-9966030-4-1

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JOE BENITEZ'S Lady Mechanika in

The LOST BOYS of WEST ABBEY

LADY MECHANIKA CREATED BY JOE BENITEZ

Chapter One

WEST ABBEY, A LESS THAN AFFLUENT AREA ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MECHANIKA CITY.

WHA...?

WHA... WHA...WHA...

WHERE...?

WHERE AM I? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

AH, HAVE YOU AWAKENED ALREADY, MY LITTLE DUCK?

I HAVE TAKEN TOO LONG WITH THE PREPARATIONS.

HE... HE... HEL...

SHHH. HUSH, CHILD.

NNGAAAAAH!

JUST SLEEP NOW, FOR A LITTLE BIT.

MMMGGG... MMMGGG...

ALL YOUR PAINS AND TROUBLES...

MMGGG...

...THEY WILL ALL BE GONE, WHEN NEXT YOU WAKE.

AAAAAHHHHH

MECHANIKA CITY.
THOMSEN RESIDENCE.

SQUEEEEE

WINIFRED!

THE TEA IS READY.

THANK YOU, LADY MECHANIKA. IT SMELLS WONDERFUL!

HOW GOES THE SEARCH FOR A NEW HOUSEKEEPER?

PAPPY HASN'T FOUND ANYONE SUITABLE YET.

I TOLD HIM WE DIDN'T NEED A HOUSEKEEPER. I CAN HELP OUT ABOUT THE FLAT.

AND WE COULD GET ONE OF THOSE HOUSEKEEPING AUTOMATONS. I SAW THEM AT MECHANI-CON. THEY CAN CLEAN ALMOST EVERYTHING!

AND WHAT DID YOUR GRANDFATHER THINK OF THAT IDEA?

HE SAID NO.

HE SAYS I NEED SOMEONE RESPECTABLE HERE TO LOOK AFTER ME. HE EVEN ASKED UNCLE ARCHIE TO STAY WITH US UNTIL HE HIRES SOMEONE.

I'M CERTAIN MR. LEWIS HAS BEEN A GREAT HELP.

HAVE YOU TAKEN UP READING THE TABLOIDS? THERE'S RARELY ANYTHING OF MERIT IN THOSE.

I'VE BEEN CHECKING TO SEE IF THERE WERE ANY STORIES ABOUT PAPPY'S DISCOVERY IN AFRICA*, BUT THERE'S BEEN NO MENTION OF IT.

GOOD. HOPEFULLY NO ONE ELSE KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT IT, AND MR. STRASSMANN REMAINS SAFE IN CALIFORNIA.

THERE WAS THIS ONE ARTICLE, THOUGH. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FIND IT OF SOME INTEREST.

OH?

RDER!

CRET EXPER

"SECRET MECHANICAL EXPERIMENTS AND MURDER IN WEST ABBEY."

YOU WERE RIGHT, FRED. THAT IS INDEED SOMETHING VERY INTERESTING. THANK YOU.

*SEE LADY MECHANIKA VOL 2: THE TABLET OF DESTINIES.

MR. LEWIS! MIGHT YOU BE INTERESTED IN GOING ON AN OUTING TONIGHT?

MR. LEWIS?

MRRNNG... MMRRLLL... NNGGG...

THAT EVENING, WEST ABBEY.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO BE LET OUT HERE, MUM? THIS IS NO NEIGHBORHOOD FOR A LADY.

THE STREETS ARE DANGEROUS AT NIGHT.

SIR...SO AM I.

WE SHALL GET ALONG FINE, BUT I THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN.

VERY WELL, MUM. AS LONG AS YOUR MAN HERE PROMISES TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR YOU!

YOU MUST BE FEELING RATHER PUT OUT, MR. LEWIS, HAVING TO *"KEEP AN EYE"* ON ALL OF US WOMEN-FOLK.

HA! YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I FRED CAN TAKE CARE OF 'ERSELF. SHE'S THE SMAR'EST PERSON I KNOW.

TRUTH BE TOLD SHE WATCHES OVER ME MORE THAN I DO HER.

THAT I CAN BELIEVE.

YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, I COULD NO' VERY WELL LET *YOU* ROAM THE STREE'S ALL BY YOUR LONESOME.

WHO KNOWS WHA' SORT OF TROUBLE YOU WOULD...

...GET INTO...

'ELLO, THERE. NICE EVENIN' FER A WALK, AY?

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES. ME AND ME BOYS HERE, WE ARE THE SOUTH SIDE SLOGGERS. IT'S OUR JOB TER KEEP THESE STREETS SAFE FROM ALL THE DODGY CHANCERS WOT RUN ABOUT.

YOU TWO SEEM TER BE IN DESPERA'E NEED OF OUR SERVICES. SO, IF YOU'LL JUST 'AND OVER OUR FEE, WE'LL MAKE SURE YOU GET TER WHERE YOU'RE GOIN' ALL SAFE AN' SOUND LIKE.

LE'S START WIV YOU, LI'L LADY. HOW 'BOUT IT? GOT ENOUGH NICKERS IN THERE TER COVER OUR FEE?

AW NO. FELLA, YOU REALLY DON' WANT TO BE GET'ING THAT CLOSE...

WILL THAT SUFFICE?

OOOH!

POW

BONK

I TRIED TO WARN YOU THERE, MATE!

MY APOLOGIES, GOOD SIRS, BUT I'M IN A BIT OF A RUSH. NOW, WILL ANY OF YOU GENTLEMEN BE EXPECTING A ***FEE*** AS WELL?

RUN!

BLIMEY, THA'S THE RIGH' LADY, YOU BLEEDIN' DONKS!

THE MECHANICAL ONE!

LET'S GET THE BLOO'Y 'ELL OUTTA HERE!

YOU SEE, LUV? YOU'RE ALWAYS GET'ING INTO TROUBLE.

GOOD THING I WAS HERE.

INDEED.

MOMENTS LATER.

EERIE SOR' OF PLACE.

THERE'S SOMETHING... SOMETHING ODDLY ***FAMILIAR*** ABOUT IT.

YOU'VE BEEN 'ERE BEFORE?

NO, I DON'T BELIEVE SO. I JUST...

UNNGHHH...

UNGH.

LUV? WHA' IS IT?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WHA... YES, YES, OF COURSE.

IT'S NOTHING, I'M FINE.

WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND?

TOYS, IT LOOKS LIKE.

I USED TO BUILD THESE WHEN I WAS A WEE LAD. NEVER ANYTHING THIS INTRICATE, THOUGH.

THE CRAFTSMANSHIP IS REMAR'ABLE. LOOK, YOU WIND IT UP AND IT MOVES ITS ARMS AND LEGS.

ZZZA ZAAA ZAAA

IS THERE ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THEM?

NO, NONE THA' I CAN SEE.

I THINK THIS IS JUST SOME TOYMAKER'S WORKSHOP. A RIGH' BLOODY CREEPY ONE, BUT I CAN FIND NO HINT OF ANY NEFARIOUS EXPERIMENTS.

NOTHING BUT THE FIVE CORPSES THAT WERE FOUND HERE, BOUND TO THE TABLES.

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

SEEMS I SHOULD BE ASKING YOU THE SAME.

YOU ARE AWARE THIS IS A CRIME SCENE?

I AM INVESTIGATING SAID CRIME, SIR. AND KILLERS ARE OFTEN COMPELLED TO RETURN TO THE SITE OF THEIR MISDEEDS. SO I ASK AGAIN...

WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU HERE?

MY NAME IS SINGH.

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR SINGH.

YOU KNOW WHO I AM. THEN YOU SHOULD KNOW I DO NOT INTEND TO HINDER YOUR INVESTIGATION IN ANY WAY, ONLY TO AID IT.

I HAVE PERSONAL REASONS FOR WANTING TO FIND THIS CULPRIT. TO STOP WHATEVER ILLICIT EXPERIMENTS HE IS PERFORMING, AND ACQUIRE JUSTICE FOR THE VICTIMS.

AND *I* AM INVESTIGATING THE MURDERS THAT TOOK PLACE HERE. IN AN OFFICIAL CAPACITY, UNLIKE YOU, ***LADY MECHANIKA.***

WILL YOU ALLOW ME TO EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE?

VERY WELL. IF YOU INSIST ON INVOLVING YOURSELVES, FOLLOW ME.

HE WAS AWFULLY ACCOMMODATING.

I DON'T BELIEVE I'VE EVER HAD SUCH AN AMIABLE ENCOUNTER WITH THE AUTHORITIES.

IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH HE WAS EXPECTING TO FIND YOU HERE.

YES.

DO YOU SUSPECT HIM?

I DON'T KNOW. NOT YET.

COME ALONG, MR. LEWIS. AND BRING SOME OF THOSE CLOCKWORK DOLLS.

ELSEWHERE...

YOUR LORDSHIP, THE UNDERTAKING WAS A SUCCESS!

I HAD TO ABANDON OUR FACILITIES BUT I MANAGED TO ABSCOND WITH THE SUBJECT.

IT IS HERE NOW, IN THE CELLAR, IF YOU WISH TO EXAMINE IT.

YOU... *WHEEZE*... ARE CERTAIN...*WHEEZE*... THIS TIME?

YOU CLAIMED SUCCESS...*WHEEZE*... LAST EXPERIMENT, AS WELL...*WHEEZE*...TO MY DISAPPOINTMENT.

I WAS HASTY THEN, MY LORD. BUT I HAVE THOROUGHLY EXAMINED THE SUBJECT THIS TIME, AND MY PROCEDURES WORKED!

IT REMEMBERS...

MECHANIKA CITY POLICE MORTUARY.

I DIDN'T REALIZE THE VICTIMS WERE SO YOUNG.

WHAT SOR' OF BLOODY MONSTER GOES AROUND MURDERIN' INNOCENT CHILDREN?

I BELIEVE THEY WERE ALL STREET URCHINS, ORPHANS AND RUNAWAYS, BOYS OF NO CONSEQUENCE WHOSE DISAPPEARANCE NO ONE WOULD NOTICE...OR CARE ABOUT.

THESE MARKINGS, THEY LOOK LIKE HEBREW OR ARABIC.

HEBREW. *"TRUTH AND LIFE EVERLASTING,"* IT SAYS, ACCORDING TO A JEWISH INSPECTOR HERE. HE WAS UNABLE TO TRANSLATE THE WORDS ON THEIR FOREHEADS.

I AM ACQUAINTED WITH SOMEONE WHO MAY BE ABLE TO HELP IN THAT REGARD. IS IT WRITTEN IN BLOOD?

IT IS, BUT NOT THE BLOOD OF THE VICTIMS. THEY HAD NO VISIBLE WOUNDS, APART FOR SOME LESIONS AROUND THE SHACKLES. CAUSE OF DEATH WAS SUFFOCATION.

THE BUILDING IS UNTENANTED AND HAS BEEN FOR SOME YEARS. THE PROPERTY OWNER IS ELDERLY AND HAS LET IT FALL INTO DISREPAIR. NO ONE ELSE HAS LAWFUL ACCESS.

VAGRANTS WERE SQUATTING IN THE UPPER FLOORS, BUT THEY CLAIM NOT TO HAVE SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING FROM THE BASEMENT, WHICH WAS ALWAYS LOCKED.

THE CHIEF INSPECTOR HAS INSTRUCTED ME TO CLOSE THE CASE AND MOVE ON TO MORE *"IMPORTANT"* MATTERS. DEATH BY MISADVENTURE, HE SAYS. BUT THESE BOYS DESERVE BETTER.

I WOULD NOT REFUSE YOUR ASSISTANCE, IF YOU STILL WISH TO GIVE IT. I IMAGINE YOU MIGHT HAVE MORE EXPERIENCE THAN I WITH MYSTICAL RITUALS AND MECHANICAL EXPERIMENTS?

AS IT HAPPENS, THEY ARE MY AREAS OF EXPERTISE. WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO ASSIST IN ANY WAY WE CAN, INSPECTOR.

THANK YOU, MR. LEWIS. THAT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL.

I PLAN TO INTERVIEW MORE OF THE RESIDENTS IN THE NEIGHBORING AREAS. WOULD YOU CARE TO ACCOMPANY ME, LADY MECHANIKA?

I'LL GO BACK TO THE FLAT AND TAKE A BET'ER LOOK AT THESE CLOCKWORK DOLLS, SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHIN' MORE TO 'EM.

DALTON STREET, WEST ABBEY

"THERE'S A CERTAIN PAWNBROKER WHO IS KNOWN TO SHELTER SEVERAL ORPHANS. I'D LIKE TO SEE IF HE RECOGNIZES ANY OF THE VICTIMS."

N Pawnbroker

COPPERS!

LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!

MR. REZNIK?

DA, I AM REZNIK. WHAT CAN I GET YOU?

I AM DETECTIVE INSPECTOR SINGH, AND THIS IS MY CONSULTANT, THE LADY MECHANIKA. WE ARE INVESTIGATING A CRIME THAT TOOK PLACE NEARBY.

NO. NO CRIME HERE. I DO NOTHING WRONG.

REST EASY, I'M NOT ACCUSING YOU. WE JUST NEED YOUR HELP. CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANY OF THE CHILDREN IN THESE PHOTOGRAPHS?

NO, NO. I DO NOT KNOW ZHEM. NOW, PLEASE GO. I WANT NO TROUBLE.

GOOD CIGARS NINE

Pw Soap

FUL MET JACKET

YOU SEEM AWFULLY NERVOUS, MR. REZNIK, FOR A LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN. ONE MIGHT THINK YOU HAD SOMETHING TO HIDE.

FOR WHAT PURPOSE EXACTLY DO YOU FOSTER SO MANY CHILDREN? THEY MUST BE A HANDFUL FOR A LONE WIDOWER.

PERHAPS SOME OF THEM GOT A BIT UNRULY, OR FAILED TO ACQUIRE THEIR DAILY CONTRIBUTION OF MISAPPROPRIATED MERCHANDISE, AND NEEDED TO BE PUNISHED?

NO! I DO NOT HURT ZHOSE BOYS! ZHEY ARE GOOD BOYS! ZHEY DO NOT MAKE NO CRIMES.

I GIVE ZHEM A GOOD HOME, GIVE ZHEM FOOD, CLOTHES! YOU, YOU PEOPLE PUT ZHEM IN WORKHOUSE, MAKE ZHEM WORK IN FACTORY, GIVE ZHEM NOTHING! AND YOU SAY I DO WRONG?!

OF COURSE NOT. YOU ARE VERY KIND TO TAKE THEM IN. BUT THERE IS A CRIMINAL OUT THERE WHO IS STEALING CHILDREN, CHILDREN LIKE YOUR BOYS, AND PERFORMING HORRIBLE EXPERIMENTS ON THEM, RESULTING IN THEIR DEATHS.

PLEASE, MR. REZNIK, HELP US STOP THIS MURDERER.

YES.

MURDER! YOU SAY ZHESE BOYS ARE DEAD?

WHO WOULD DO ZHIS?! WHO WOULD DO ZHIS TO MY BOYS?

DA. TOM. HE IS GONE FOR TWO DAYS. AND ZHIS ONE, BILLY, FOR FIVE DAYS.

YOU RECOGNIZE THEM?

I...I ZHINK ZHEY RUN AWAY, FIND NEW HOME. I DO NOT ZHINK...MANY BOYS, ZHEY RUN AWAY ZHIS YEAR.

IF THEY DID INDEED RUN AWAY. I BELIEVE THIS MAN HAS BEEN KILLING FOR SOME TIME.

WOULD YOU MIND IF WE SPEAK WITH YOUR BOYS? ASK THEM A FEW QUESTIONS?

YOU, *POLITSIYA*. YOU FIND THE *SVOLOCH* WHO DO ZHIS. YOU MAKE HIM PAY.

I PROMISE.

COME.

EY! LISTEN! ZHESE PEOPLE, ZHEY TRY TO HELP TOM AND BILLY. YOU, YOU TELL ZHEM WHAT YOU KNOW.

TOM AND BILLY? AW, I THINK THEY'S RUN OFF WIT' THE TOY MAN, THA' POOFTAH WIT' THE PUPPETS.

AY, YEAH, I SEEN 'EM TALKIN' TO HIM.

WHO IS THIS "*TOY MAN*"?

'E'S BEEN AROUN' A FEW. 'E PROMISES US TOYS IF WE GO ON WIT' HIM, BUT HE'S A CREEPAH. OUR TOM AN' BILLY THOUGH, THEY'S NONE TOO BRIGH'.

WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE?

I NEVAH GE' TOO CLOSE, KEPT MY DISTANCE I DID. BUT I THINK 'E HAD A MARK ON 'IS FACE, LIKE A SCAR O' SOME SORTS. ASK GEORGIE.

GEORGIE GOT RIGH' CLOSE TO THE TOSSAH. CLOSE ENOUGH TA NICK 'IM. DIDN'T YA, GEORGIE?

GEORGIE!

NOT SO FAST!

IS THAT TRUE, GEORGIE? DID YOU STEAL SOMETHING FROM THIS TOY MAN?

N...N...NO! I DIDN'T TAKE NOTHIN'! I SWEAR!

DON'T WORRY, GEORGIE. YOU'RE NOT IN ANY TROUBLE. WE DON'T CARE IF YOU TOOK SOMETHING THAT WASN'T YOURS.

I WAS AN ORPHAN TOO, JUST LIKE YOU. BUT I DIDN'T HAVE A NICE MAN LIKE MR. REZNIK TO CARE FOR ME. I UNDERSTAND HAVING TO STEAL TO SURVIVE.

BU... BUT YOU'RE A COPPER!

I AM, YES. I WORK FOR THE POLICE NOW. BUT WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, I LIVED ON THE STREETS OF KOLKATA, A HARSHER TOWN THAN THIS, WHERE THERE WAS NO ONE TO HELP.

SO WHEN I GREW UP, I BECAME A POLICEMAN, TO PROTECT PEOPLE LIKE YOU. SO YOU CAN GROW UP SAFELY AND MAYBE SOMEDAY BECOME A POLICEMAN YOURSELF, IF YOU WANTED.

I CAN BE A POLICE MAN?

YOU CAN BE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE. THIS IS A CITY FULL OF OPPORTUNITY.

NOW, WILL YOU HELP ME TO CATCH THE BAD GUYS? CAN YOU GIVE ME WHAT YOU FOUND ON THE TOY MAN?

A JEWISH RELIC.

THE ACQUAINTANCE I MENTIONED EARLIER IS A JEWISH SCHOLAR. WE CAN PAY HIM A VISIT IN THE MORNING, SEE IF HE RECOGNIZES THIS OR ANY OF THE OTHER PARTICULARS OF THIS CASE.

VERY WELL. IN THE MEANTIME, I WILL CHECK WITH THE OTHER INSPECTORS AND SEE IF ANYONE ELSE HAS HEARD OF THIS *"TOY MAN."*

MEANWHILE, AT THE THOMSEN RESIDENCE...

HEY, UNCLE ARCHIE! WANT TO PLAY CHESS?

SORRY, FRED, I CAN'T RIGH' NOW. I 'AVE TO TAKE THIS THING APART FOR A CASE I'M WORKIN' WITH THE LADY.

BESIDES, YOU ALWAYS WIN.

I CAN PLAY WITH A HANDICAP, NO QUEEN!

HEHE, I THINK YOU'D STILL BEAT ME!

HEY, THESE ARE LIKE THE MECHANICAL DOLLS FROM THAT TABLOID STORY! IS THAT THE CASE YOU'RE WORKING ON?

IT IS. PLEASE BE CAREFUL WITH THA'! I'VE NO' EXAMINED IT YET AND IT MAY BE DANGEROUS.

THIS ONE'S CUTE!

OH!

THERE'S SOMETHING IN ITS MOUTH.

WHAT?

LOOKS LIKE A LITTLE SCROLL.

BRING IT HERE. LET ME SEE.

IT'S WRITTEN IN HEBREW.

HEBREW? YOU CAN READ HEBREW?

OF COURSE. IT SAYS... "MET."

IT...IT MEANS...

"MET." WHAT DOES THA' MEAN?

...“DEATH.”

GZZ GZZ

Chapter Two

SCRAPE SCRAPE

SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE

WHA...?

NO, NO, NO...

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

UNGHHHH...

WAS THAT REAL?

A TRUE MEMORY, OR JUST A NIGHTMARE?

SIGH NO USE WORRYING OVER IT.

THE DEAD NEED MY ATTENTION NOW.

INSPECTOR SINGH?

AH, LADY MECHANIKA! GOOD MORNING!

I THOUGHT WE AGREED TO MEET AT THE SYNAGOGUE.

A BAKER NEAR MY FLAT MAKES THE MOST DELECTABLE MUFFINS. WOULD YOU CARE FOR ONE?

MUFFINS?

I...UH... SURE. I GUESS I COULD HAVE A MUFFIN.

WE DID, BUT I WAS EARLY AND THOUGHT WE MIGHT RIDE THERE TOGETHER. I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND?

NOT AT ALL.

THANK YOU KINDLY, INSPECTOR.

CHUGGA-CHUGGA CHUGGA
I LOOKED AT THAT STORY AGAIN, THE ONE IN THE TABLOIDS THAT LED ME TO THIS CASE, AND I NOTICED SOMETHING RATHER PECULIAR.
OH?
THE PHOTOGRAPH THEY PRINTED SEEMED REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO ONE YOU SHOWED THE PAWNBROKER, MR. REZNIK.
IS THAT SO?
YES. IN FACT, I BELIEVE IT WAS IDENTICAL.
IT LEADS ONE TO WONDER HOW A JOURNALIST MIGHT COME TO OBTAIN OFFICIAL POLICE EVIDENCE.
INDEED.
PERHAPS SOMEONE AT THE STATION BELIEVED THE CASE MERITED MORE CONSIDERATION THAN IT WAS GIVEN, AND THAT INCREASED PUBLIC ATTENTION MIGHT GARNER SAID CONSIDERATION.
AND PERHAPS THAT SOMEONE ALSO HOPED IT WOULD ATTRACT THE ATTENTION AND POSSIBLE AID OF A RENOWNED INVESTIGATOR RESIDING IN THE CITY, SOMEONE WITH A REPUTED INTEREST IN MECHANICAL EXPERIMENTATION?
HMMM... IS THAT SO?
PERHAPS. I AM, OF COURSE, ONLY SPECULATING.
OF COURSE.

INSPECTOR, THE STORY YOU TOLD THE CHILDREN AT THE PAWNSHOP, THAT YOU WERE ONCE A THIEF YOURSELF, WAS ANY OF THAT TRUE? OR WAS IT JUST A RUSE TO GAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE?

IT WAS ALL TRUE, ACTUALLY. MY MOTHER WAS OF THE SERVANT CLASS AND DIED WHEN I WAS YOUNG. MY FATHER I NEVER KNEW; AN ENGLISHMAN PASSING THROUGH INDIA WHO TOOK A LIKING TO MY MOTHER.

I GREW UP ON THE STREETS AND LEARNED TO BEG AND STEAL TO SURVIVE.

I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO INTRUDE.

THERE'S NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE. I'M NOT ASHAMED OF MY CHILDHOOD TRANSGRESSIONS. IF ANYTHING, THEY PROBABLY HELPED ME BECOME A BETTER DETECTIVE.

IT'S SUCH AN EXTREME REVERSAL. HOW DID YOU COME TO BE AN OFFICER OF THE LAW?

I WANTED TO CATCH A KILLER.

OF A MURDER THAT MEANT LESS THAN NOTHING TO THE PROPER AUTHORITIES, BUT EVERYTHING TO ME.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? THEY SAY YOU WERE FOUND LOCKED IN A BASEMENT LABORATORY FILLED WITH CORPSES AND MECHANICAL COMPONENTS, A VICTIM OF GRUESOME EXPERIMENTS SOMEWHAT SIMILAR TO THIS CASE.

THAT'S WHAT I WAS TOLD. I HAVE NO MEMORY OF IT.

YOU HAVE NO MEMORIES AT ALL OF YOUR PAST? YOUR CHILDHOOD? OR THE TIME YOU WERE HELD CAPTIVE?

NO. NONE. EXCEPT...

EXCEPT WHAT?

IT'S PROB-ABLY NOTHING, JUST NIGHTMARES BROUGHT ON BY THE RESEMBLANCE TO THIS CASE.

DO YOU THINK THIS KILLER MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR PAST?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT I INTEND TO FIND OUT.

AND MAKE NO MISTAKE, EVEN IF IT PROVES TO BE UNRELATED, I ALSO WANT JUSTICE FOR THOSE POOR BOYS.

YES. AS DO I.

GREAT SYNAGOGUE OF MECHANIKA CITY.

SHALOM ALEIKHEM, REBBE.

ALEIKHEM SHALOM, LADY MECHANIKA. IT IS SO NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

AND YOU, REBBE EPHRAIM. THIS IS DETECTIVE INSPECTOR SINGH WITH THE CITY POLICE. WE WERE HOPING YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO ASSIST US ON A CASE.

OF COURSE. HOW CAN I HELP?

WE ARE LOOKING FOR A MAN, A JEW WE BELIEVE, WHOSE FACE IS SEVERELY DISFIGURED, SCARRED OVER THE ENTIRE RIGHT HALF.

HE'S BEEN ROAMING THE STREETS OF WEST ABBEY, LURING CHILDREN WITH TOYS AND ABDUCTING THEM ...ENDING FINALLY WITH THEIR MURDERS.

MONSTROUS!

YOU SAY HE IS DISFIGURED? I DO NOT BELIEVE I KNOW OF ANY SUCH MAN. WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON IS PART OF OUR CONGREGATION?

HE WAS CARRYING THIS.

AH, A *KAMEA*, AN AMULET OF PROTECTION AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS.

IT IS JEWISH, YES, BUT NOT UNCOMMON. I'M AFRAID YOU WILL FIND THAT MANY CARRY ONE LIKE IT.

WHAT ABOUT THIS? THESE CHARACTERS WERE WRITTEN IN BLOOD ON THE FOREHEADS OF ALL THE VICTIMS. I WAS UNABLE TO DETERMINE THEIR SIGNIFICANCE.

CURIOUS... THEY SPELL THE HEBREW WORD, *GOLEM*.

GOLEM? WHAT DOES *GOLEM* MEAN?

A SOULLESS CREATURE, MADE FROM CLAY AND GIVEN LIFE BY MAGIC.

THE *GOLEM* HAS NO FREE WILL OR INTELLIGENCE. IT IS A MINDLESS SERVANT OF ITS CREATOR AND MUST OBEY HIS COMMANDS.

IN OUR LEGENDS, THEY WERE CREATED TO PERFORM LABORIOUS TASKS, OR TO PROTECT AND DEFEND THE COMMUNITY. THEY CAN WORK TIRELESSLY, AND CANNOT BE DESTROYED EXCEPT BY THE MAGIC WITH WHICH THEY WERE CREATED.

CAN A *GOLEM* BE MADE FROM ANY INANIMATE MATERIAL, INCLUDING METALS?

THE STORIES WITH WHICH I AM FAMILIAR ALWAYS DESCRIBE THEM AS BEING FORMED FROM CLAY OR DUST, BUT I IMAGINE IT COULD BE POSSIBLE TO MAKE ONE FROM OTHER TYPES OF MATTER.

AND WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CREATING SUCH A *GOLEM?* MIGHT IT INVOLVE SOME SORT OF HUMAN SACRIFICE?

WE FOUND THESE CLOCKWORK FIGURES AT THE MURDER SITE. PERHAPS OUR KILLER WAS ATTEMPTING TO CREATE A MECHANICAL *GOLEM* THROUGH THE RITUALISTIC MURDER OF THE CHILDREN.

THE SECRET FOR CREATING A *GOLEM* HAS BEEN LOST FOR MANY CENTURIES, BUT I AM CERTAIN IT WOULD NOT REQUIRE ANY BLOOD RITUALS.

JEWISH MAGIC USUALLY INVOLVES USING WORDS OF POWER WHICH ARE INSCRIBED IN A SPECIFIC MANNER ONTO SPECIALLY PREPARED PARCHMENT.

THE JEWISH FAITH DOES NOT CONDONE HUMAN SACRIFICE.

NO, BUT WHAT ABOUT SOMEONE WORKING OUTSIDE THE FAITH?

AN UNORTHODOX SECT, PERHAPS, OR AN EXCOMMUNICATED RABBI OR OTHER PARIAH DENOUNCED FOR PERFORMING SOME PROSCRIBED PRACTICE?

MOLOCH...

WHO?

THE SERVANTS OF MOLOCH, AN ANCIENT SECT. I DO NOT KNOW IF THEY STILL EXIST.

THEY ARE NOT JEWISH, BUT HAVE STOLEN AND PERVERTED MANY OF OUR WAYS. THEY COULD VERY WELL HAVE DEVISED SOME CORRUPTED METHOD FOR CREATING A *GOLEM*.

THE RUMORS SAY THEY PERFORM BLOOD MAGIC -- SPECIFICALLY CHILD SACRIFICES -- IN THEIR RITUALS TO SUMMON DEMONS AND OTHER DARK ENTITIES.

WHY WOULD A DEVIL WORSHIPPER CARRY AN AMULET THAT WARDS AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS?

THE SERVANTS OF MOLOCH DO NOT WORSHIP THE DEMONS THEY SUMMON. THEY COMMAND THEM AND FORCE THEM TO DO THEIR BIDDING, A VERY DANGEROUS UNDERTAKING.

SOMEONE ENGAGED IN SUCH FORBIDDEN RITES WOULD HAVE GREAT NEED OF A *KAMEA*, MORE SO THAN ANY OTHER.

YES, IT IS VERY POSSIBLE THE KILLER YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IS A SERVANT OF MOLOCH.

YOUR REBBE FRIEND IS CLEARLY A VERY WISE AND RESPECTED TEACHER, BUT HE SEEMED TERRIFIED WHEN SPEAKING OF THESE SERVANTS OF MOLOCH.

HOW CAN ANYONE IN THIS DAY AND AGE BELIEVE IN DEMONS AND MYSTICAL BOOGEYMEN?

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN ANY SORT OF MAGIC OR THE SUPERNATURAL?

I BELIEVE PEOPLE BELIEVE IN IT, AND WILL USE IT AS AN EXCUSE TO JUSTIFY THEIR DARKER IMPULSES. BUT NO, I CAN'T SAY I BELIEVE IN MAGICAL AUTOMATONS OR SUMMONING DEMONS OR ANY SUCH NONSENSE.

I'VE SEEN MY FAIR SHARE OF STRANGE OCCURRENCES, INSPECTOR. SEEN THEM WITH MY OWN EYES. THINGS WHICH CANNOT BE READILY EXPLAINED BY SCIENCE.

PERHAPS THEY ARE SIMPLY THINGS THAT SCIENCE HAS YET TO EXPLAIN. MANY OF THE CONTRAPTIONS OF THIS CITY WOULD BE CONSIDERED MAGIC TO SOMEONE FROM THE LAST CENTURY.

MANY TODAY MIGHT EVEN CONSIDER ***YOU*** MAGIC.

WHETHER YOU CALL IT SCIENCE OR MAGIC IS INCONSEQUENTIAL. THERE EXISTS AN *ARCANA MUNDI*, A HIDDEN WORLD FILLED WITH PHENOMENA BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION.

PREPARE YOURSELF, INSPECTOR, YOU MAY BE ENTERING THAT WORLD SOON. AND ONCE SEEN, IT CANNOT BE UNSEEN.

I HAVE NO FEAR OF GHOSTS OR GOBLINS, LADY MECHANIKA.

MAN IS A DEADLIER ENEMY.

THE GOOD REBBE MAY HAVE PROVIDED US WITH A POSSIBLE MOTIVE FOR THE KILLER, BUT WE ARE NO CLOSER TO LOCATING HIM.

I'LL CHECK IN WITH MR. LEWIS, SEE IF HE'S BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE THE ORIGIN OF THOSE CLOCKWORK FIGURES.

AND I AM DUE BACK AT THE STATION, TO WORK ON MY MORE "*IMPORTANT*" CASES, BUT I WILL CONTINUE TO INQUIRE ABOUT A MAN WITH A SCARRED FACE...

"...AS WELL AS THESE SERVANTS OF MOLOCH."

MEANWHILE...

TELL ME YOUR NAME, CHILD.

TE...TE... TOM. MY NAME IS TOM.

WHO...WHO ARE YOU? WHERE AM I? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

I WANNA GO HOME!

SHHHH. WHERE IS YOUR HOME, TOM? CAN YOU TELL ME?

WITH MR. REZNIK. I LIVE WITH MR. REZNIK.

AND WHO IS MR. REZNIK?

HE...HE OWNS THE PAWN SHOP, ON DALTON STREET.

WILL YOU TAKE ME HOME NOW? PLEASE?

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

WHEEZE... WHEEEEZE... YEEEEES...

PLEASE, PLEASE...

NOW, NOW, LITTLE DUCK. JUST OPEN YOUR MOUTH A BIT. I'LL MAKE SURE YOU GET HOME.

REAL--

GI GIZI

EVERYTHING IS READY FOR THE FINAL PROCEDURE.

WE CAN BEGIN WHENEVER YOU WISH.

WHEEZE... NOWWWWW...

THOMSEN RESIDENCE, LATER THAT DAY...

MR. LEWIS?

ZZZZZZZZ

MR. LEWIS.

MR. LEWIS!

HWUH? WHA... WINIFRED?

MAT'ER O' FACT, LUV, I DID. FOUND AN ORIENTAL LOOKIN' CHARACTER ETCHED ON THE BOT'OM LEFT FOOT O' EACH FIGURE.

I ASKED AROUND AND TURNS OUT IT BELONGS TO THIS BLOKE MR. JIANG, A CRAFTSMAN IN MIDTOWN WOT SPECIALIZES IN MECHANIZED TOYS.

IT'S JUST ME, MR. LEWIS.

HAVE YOU HAD ANY LUCK WITH THE CLOCKWORK TOYS? FIND ANYTHING OF INTEREST?

GOOD WORK, MR. LEWIS.

OH, AND FRED FOUND AN ODD PIECE O' PAPER ROLLED UP INSIDE THE MOUTH O' THE... EY, WHERE'D IT GO? THE BEAR LOOKIN' DOLL?

EH, FRED MUST 'AVE MOVED IT, SHE WAS PLAYIN' WITH IT LAST NIGHT.

THE OTHER DOLL HAS A SMALL COMPAR'MENT IN ITS MOUTH TOO, BUT THERE WAS NOTHIN' IN IT.

WAS THERE ANYTHING WRITTEN ON THE PIECE OF PAPER?

I HAVE IT RIGH' HERE. FRED SAID IT'S THE HEBREW WORD FOR "DEATH."

INTERESTING. ONE THING WE LEARNED THIS MORNING IS THAT OUR KILLER MAY BE TRYING TO USE JEWISH MAGIC TO ANIMATE THESE CLOCKWORK FIGURES.

AND ACCORDING TO REBBE EPHRAIM, JEWISH MAGIC INVOLVES INSCRIPTIONS OF MAGIC WORDS WRITTEN ON PARCHMENT.

MR. LEWIS, IF YOU WOULD, PLEASE BRING ALONG THE DOLL AND THE SCROLL.

LET'S GO PAY A VISIT TO THIS TOYMAKER.

JIANG'S WONDERFUL WORLD OF CLOCKWORK TOYS

MR. JIANG? I AM LADY MECHANIKA AND...

OH, HELLO, HELLO! YES, I HAVE HEARD THE STORIES ABOUT YOU! YOU ARE VERY WELCOME HERE!

WHAT CAN I GET FOR YOU? A WALKING CAT OR BEAR? OR I MAKE FOR YOU SOMETHING SPECIAL, A LITTLE GIRL DOLL WITH RED EYES PERHAPS?

ACTUALLY, SIR, WE'RE NOT HERE TO BUY A TOY TODAY, THOUGH THEY ARE INCREDIBLY IMPRESSIVE.

SPEAK FOR YOU'SELF, LUV. I MIGH' LIKE TO BUY ONE. OR THREE.

WE WERE HOPING YOU COULD HELP US SOLVE A MYSTERY. SOME OF YOUR CLOCKWORK TOYS WERE FOUND AT THE SCENE OF A CRIME, A MURDER.

MURDER? OH NO, THAT IS HORRIBLE.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

THIS IS ONE O' THE TOYS WE FOUND AT THE CRIME SCENE. CAN YOU TRY TO REMEMBER WHO BOUGH' IT?

OH! I WISH TO HELP BUT I MAKE VERY MANY TOYS. I AM SO SORRY BUT I CANNOT REMEMBER.

ARE YOU SURE, MATE? THESE DOLLS, EACH O' THEM HAD A COMPAR'MENT IN ITS MOUTH FOR HOLDIN' A SMALL SCROLL O' PAPER.

OH, YES! COMPARTMENTS IN THE MOUTH! I REMEMBER THIS! I MADE THEM SPECIAL FOR MR. DURRANT.

HE HAS PURCHASED MANY TOYS FROM ME THE LAST FEW YEARS. USUALLY SMALL DOLLS LIKE THIS, AND ONCE A VERY SPECIAL REQUEST, A TEN FOOT TALL CLOCKWORK MAN.

ALL OF THEM WITH THE MOUTH HAVING THIS SMALL COMPARTMENT INSIDE, HE WAS VERY PARTICULAR ABOUT THAT.

THIS MR. DURRANT, DOES HE PERCHANCE HAVE A BADLY SCARRED FACE?

SCARS? NO, NO SCARS. HE IS AN OLD MAN, RICH, BUT SICK, HE CANNOT WALK. HE WAS ASSISTED BY ONE OF THOSE AUTOMATONS, THE BLACKPOOL BUTLER? VERY, VERY EXPENSIVE.

DO YOU HAVE AN ADDRESS WHERE WE MIGHT FIND MR. DURRANT?

I AM AFRAID NOT. HE PAID FOR EVERYTHING IN FULL BY CASH AND HAD HIS PEOPLE PICK UP HIS PURCHASES. I AM SORRY I COULD NOT HELP MORE, LADY MECHANIKA.

ON THE CONTRARY, SIR, YOUR ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN EXTREMELY HELPFUL. THANK YOU.

MEANWHILE, AT THE THOMSEN RESIDENCE...

UNCLE ARCHIE! I'M HOME!

UNCLE ARCHIE?

ALL OF THE DOLLS ARE GONE. HE MUST BE OFF WITH LADY MECHANIKA, WORKING THE CASE.

HRRMPH! HIS BIG BOTTY HAS SQUASHED ALL THE PILLOWS! AND THEY SMELL LIKE HIS STINKY BREATH!

IF HE'S GOING TO STAY MUCH LONGER, I SHOULD TELL HIM TO GO TAKE HIS NAPS SOMEWHERE ELSE.

THIS IS MY FAVORITE READING SPOT!

GZZT

WHA... *GASP!*

MECHANIKA CITY POLICE HEADQUARTERS

LADY MECHANIKA! MR. LEWIS! DID THE CLOCKWORK FIGURES PROVIDE ANY CLUES TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF OUR KILLER?

YES, ACTUALLY.

MR. LEWIS WAS ABLE TO TRACK DOWN THE MAKER OF THE CLOCKWORK TOYS, AND HE PROVIDED US WITH THE NAME OF THE MAN WHO PURCHASED THEM, A MR. DURRANT.

DO YOU THINK YOU COULD LOCATE HIS RESIDENCE OF RECORD WITH JUST HIS SURNAME? HE'S AN OLDER GENTLEMAN, APPARENTLY VERY WEALTHY.

DURRANT?

I'VE HEARD THAT NAME BEFORE...

YES. MR. LUCRETIUS DURRANT. HE OWNS THE BUILDING IN WHICH THE MURDERS WERE CONDUCTED.

A WEALTHY INDUSTRIALIST, HIS COMPANY MAKES MEDICAL GADGETRY. I HAD ELIMINATED HIM AS A SUSPECT BECAUSE OF HIS CIRCUMSTANCES. THE MAN IS ON HIS DEATHBED.

HE MIGH' HAVE HIRED SOMEONE TO PERFORM THESE GHASTLY RITUALS FOR 'IM. PEOPLE WILL DO ANYTHING FOR MONEY.

TRUE.

OR HE MIGHT HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO SOME SORT OF CON, GIVING UP HIS WEALTH FOR PROMISES OF A MAGICAL CURE FOR HIS AILMENTS.

THAT IS A POSSIBILITY AS WELL. SHALL WE GO AND ASK HIM? HE HAS AN ESTATE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

IT'S SEVERAL MILES OUTSIDE THE CITY. WE'LL NEED TO FIND A COACH WILLING TO DRIVE US THERE.

WELL NOW, INSPEC'OR, IF YOU DON' MIND A BIT OF A SNUG RIDE, I MIGH' HAVE A BET'ER SOLUTION.

FWOOP

FWOOP

FWOOP

THE LEWIS FLYER!

UH...ARE YOU CERTAIN THIS... VEHICLE...MEETS WITH CURRENT AIR SAFETY REGULATIONS? WHERE DID YOU ACQUIRE IT?

I BUILT IT M'SELF! THIS IS JUST A PROTOTYPE, IT'S NO' ON THE MARKET YET! IT'S EXPERIMEN'AL!

EXPERIMENTAL? YOU MEAN IT HASN'T BEEN TESTED? THAT ISN'T EXACTLY REASSURING, MR. LEWIS!

DON' YOU WORRY, INSPEC'OR! IT'S PERFECTLY SAFE! I'VE NO' LOST A SINGLE PASSENGER YET!

COURSE THERE'S ALWAYS A FIRST TIME...

FWOOP

FWOOOP FWOOOP

HOLD ON TO SOMETHIN'! I'M BRINGIN' HER DOWN!

WE SHOULD APPROACH WITH CAUTION. THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT MANNER OF DEVILRY WE MAY ENCOUNTER INSIDE.

AGREED.

KNOCK KNOCK

GOOD EVENING. HOW MAY I BE OF ASSISTANCE?

WE ARE HERE TO SEE MR. DURRANT.

I AM AFRAID HIS LORDSHIP IS NOT RECEIVING GUESTS AT THIS TIME. IF YOU WOULD PLEASE LEAVE YOUR NAMES, I WILL BE SURE TO--

I AM DETECTIVE INSPECTOR SINGH. MR. DURRANT IS WANTED FOR QUESTIONING ON AN OFFICIAL MATTER. WHERE MIGHT WE FIND HIM?

HIS LORDSHIP IS NOT RECEIVING--

SEARCH THE PREMISES.

EXCUSE ME! THIS IS THOROUGHLY IMPROPER!

BLIMEY! THESE ARE HUMAN ORGANS!

YES. AND I SOMEHOW DOUBT THEY WERE DONATED VOLUNTARILY.

NO LIMBS OR ANYTHING LIKE YOUR MECHANICS.

NO, I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS IS CONNECTED TO MY PAST AFTER ALL. THIS IS SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

AY! IT *MOVED!* THIS BRAIN IS STILL ALIVE!

I THINK THE OLD BOY'S BEEN LOOKIN' FOR A WAY TO CHEAT DEATH, USIN' MAGIC OR SCIENCE OR SOME BLOODY WEIRD COMBINATION OF THE TWO.

MR. JIANG MENTIONED BUILDING HIM A MAN-SIZED FIGURE. PERHAPS THIS ISN'T ABOUT CREATING A MINDLESS *GOLEM* AT ALL, BUT ABOUT TRANSFERRING A MIND INTO A *GOLEM'S* BODY.

IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

GUESTS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN THIS PART OF THE HOUSE. I MUST INSIST YOU DEPART IMMEDIATELY!

Voodoo Dan

WHAT WAS THAT?

UPSTAIRS!

EXCUSE ME! THIS IS THOROUGHLY IMPROPER. YOU ARE NOT PERMITTED UPSTAIRS! PLEASE COME BACK DOWN AT ONCE!

STOP! POLICE!

STEP AWAY FROM THAT MAN AND KEEP YOUR HANDS UP!

THIS IS MR. DURRANT, THE OWNER OF THIS ESTATE, AND I AM RABBI ZEVI, HIS...PRIEST. WE ARE NOT ENGAGING IN ANYTHING ILLEGAL.

TELL THAT TO THE BOYS YOU MURDERED.

MURDER? I DON'T KNOW WHAT--

QUIET!

HOW IS HE?

HE'S DEAD, I'M AFRAID.

WELL, NOT EXACTLY...

CRASH!

OH, BUGGER ME!

CLIT

TRESPASSERS! LEAVE MY HOME! NOW!!!

CLIT

CLIT

DURRANT?

WHA' THE BLOODY 'ELL HAVE YOU DONE TO YOU'SELF...

IS IT NOT INGENIOUS? THE CULMINATION OF YEARS OF RESEARCH!

NO LONGER ARE WE BOUND BY THE LIMITATIONS OF THESE FRAGILE BODIES.

FINALLY, MAN CAN BREAK FREE FROM THE SHACKLES OF MORTAL FLESH!

NOW I AM IMMORTAL!

BUT AT WHAT COST?

WHAT YOU HAVE DONE HERE IS NOT A SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH. IT IS THE MONSTROUS RESULT OF THE BLACKEST OF MAGICS.

IT IS ALSO EXTREMELY ILLEGAL.

MY LORD, THEY ARE WITH THE AUTHORITIES. THEY KNOW ABOUT THE SUBJECTS, OUR EXPERI--

UGH...

THWK!

MR. DURRANT, YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR THE MURDERS OF THOMAS WHITE AND WILLIAM SMITH, AMONG OTHERS.

THE CRIMES FOR WHICH YOU WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE... UH...DEACTIVATED.

HA HA HA HA HA

YOUR TRIVIAL LAWS DO NOT APPLY TO ME!

I HAVE FATHERED A NEW RACE OF GODS AMONG MEN! BUT ONLY THE CHOSEN FEW WILL BE ALLOWED TO ASCEND.

DID YOU TRULY BELIEVE YOUR SUPERIORS KNEW NOTHING OF MY EFFORTS, INSPECTOR?

HA HA HA HA HA

IT IS YOU WHO SHALL BE DEACTIVATED!

OOOF!

SKRASHH

FZZSHHKK

NO' BLOODY LIKELY, YA OLD WANKER!

THINK IT'S YOU WOT NEEDS TO GO!

YOUR WEAPON IS USELESS ON ME, BOY!

AWKK!

UNGH!

LEWIS!

YOU INSIDIOUS MONSTER!

THUNK

HOW MANY HAD TO DIE SO YOU COULD TURN YOURSELF INTO THIS ABOMINATION?

WHAT ARE THE LIVES OF A FEW MISERABLE DELINQUENTS COMPARED TO IMMORTALITY FOR HUMANITY'S GREATEST MINDS?

THE WORLD'S BEST INVENTORS AND SCIENTISTS, ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS... FREE TO CREATE FOREVER!

HONK

THAT IS NOT FOR YOU TO DECIDE!

DIE, YOU BASTARD!!!

HA HA HA HA HA!

DO YOU NOT YET UNDERSTAND? YOU CANNOT HARM ME! I AM INDESTRUCTIBLE!

PCK PCK PCK PCK PCK

UNGH...

DEATH...

NO MORE PAIN, NO MORE ILLNESS, NO MORE DEATH!

LEWIS! THE SCROLL!

THE SCROLL THAT FRED FOUND! BRING IT TO ME!

I... GOT IT... UNNGH...

MR. LEWIS! GIVE IT HERE!

MECHANIKA!

INSPECTOR! INSERT IT INTO ITS MOUTH!

NO. WHERE DID YOU...

...GET...

CLUNK

PHEW!

STILL NOT CONVINCED ABOUT MAGIC, INSPECTOR?

AS YOU SAID, WHETHER YOU CALL IT MAGIC OR SCIENCE, IT DOES NOT REALLY MATTER.

BUT I'VE CERTAINLY NEVER ENCOUNTERED ANY-THING QUITE LIKE THIS BEFORE!

HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT SCROLL WOULD STOP IT?

I DIDN'T. IT WAS JUST A GUESS.

YOU DEVELOP A SORT OF...INSTINCT...ABOUT SUCH THINGS WHEN YOU ARE FREQUENTLY ENTANGLED IN THE *ARCANA MUNDI*.

HOW ARE YOU DOING THERE, MR. LEWIS?

MOMENTS LATER...

BE CAREFUL, YOU IDIOT!

OOPS.

THUD

IF I MAY, LADY MECHANIKA, WOULD IT BE AT ALL POSSIBLE TO CALL ON YOU IN THE FUTURE IF I SHOULD HAPPEN UPON ANOTHER CASE THAT WARRANTS A MORE... SPECIALIZED HAND?

OF COURSE, INSPECTOR. ANY TIME.

I'M SORRY THIS CASE FAILED TO PROVIDE ANY CLUES TO YOUR LOST PAST. IF I EVER HEAR OF ANYTHING WHICH MAY HELP, YOU CAN BE SURE I'LL LET YOU KNOW.

THANK YOU, INSPECTOR SINGH. THAT WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATED.

WHEN YOU GET BACK TO THE CITY, PLEASE ASK THE STATION TO SEND OUT A WAGON. I'LL MAKE CERTAIN THIS ONE HEADS TO THE GALLOWS.

ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN TRUST THEM? DURRANT SAID YOUR SUPERIORS KNEW ABOU' AND EVEN SUPPOR'ED HIS EXPERIMENTS.

THE CITY COUNCILORS, MAYBE. BUT THE POLICE FORCE? NEVER.

THE MEN IN MY DEPARTMENT ARE ALL LOYAL. I'D STAKE MY LIFE ON IT.

ONE MORE THING, IS IT NECESSARY TO HAVE THE *GOLEM* DISMANTLED OR IS THE "*SPELL*" BROKEN?

I WOULD DISMANTLE IT AND MELT OR BURY THE PARTS, SEPARATELY. I DON'T KNOW FOR CERTAIN, BUT I THINK REMOVING THE SCROLL MIGHT REAWAKEN...

OH NO, FRED!

WHAT'S WRONG?

THE OTHER DOLL! THE BEAR FROM WHICH SHE REMOVED THE SCROLL!

BOLLOCKS! SHE'S BEEN HOME ALONE WITH IT ALL AFTERNOON!

FWOOP FWOOP FWOOP

HURRY, MR. LEWIS!

SHE'S GOIN' AS FAST AS SHE CAN!

I SHOULD 'AVE KNOWN BET'ER THAN TO LEAVE HER HOME ALONE WITH THA' CONTRAPTION!

I'LL NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IF ANYTHING 'APPENS TO HER!

WE CAN ONLY HOPE THE DOLLS WERE ALL INACTIVE.

THEY WERE, AFTER ALL, FROM THEIR FAILED EXPERIMENTS.

I HOPE YOU'RE RIGH', LUV. I HOPE YOU'RE RIGH'.

QUICKLY, MR. LEWIS!

FRED!!!

FRED?

OH GOOD, YOU'RE HOME!

I'VE BEEN PLAYING WITH HIM ALL DAY. YOU WON'T BELIEVE THE THINGS HE CAN DO! HE IS SIMPLY AMAZING!

I EVEN TAUGHT HIM TO PLAY CHESS. UNCLE ARCHIE, I'M SORRY TO HAVE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT I THINK HE MIGHT BE A LITTLE BETTER THAN YOU.

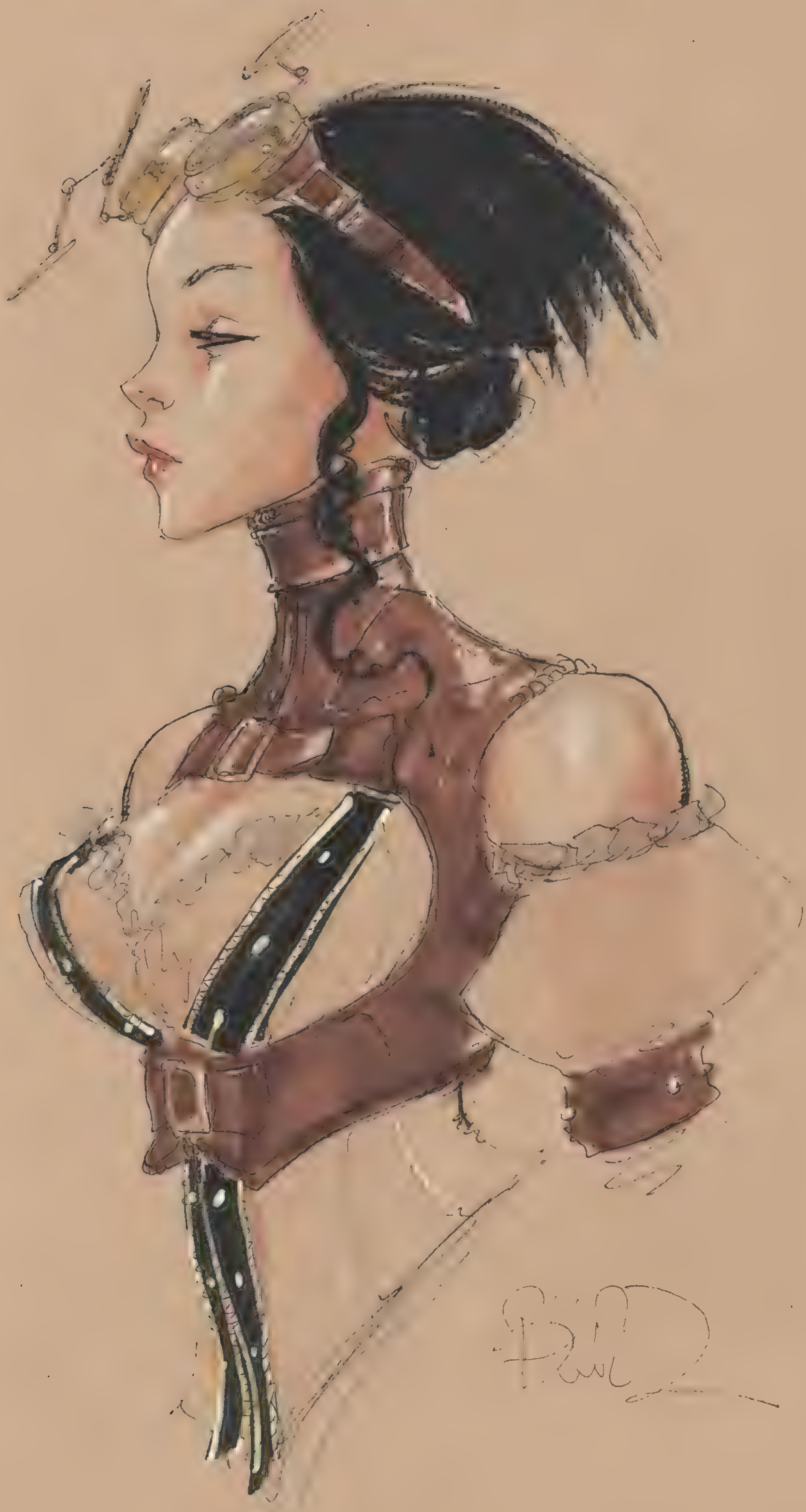
HELLO. I'M MONTI. VERY NICE TO MEET YOU.

IF YOU DON'T NEED HIM FOR THE CASE ANYMORE, CAN I KEEP HIM? I ALREADY GAVE HIM A NAME.

GO AHEAD, INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO UNCLE ARCHIE AND LADY MECHANIKA.

THE END

COVER GALLERY



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